

filed on March 3, 1999. Please consider the following Remarks prior to examination of this continuation application.

Remarks

All of the claims of the above-captioned application are supported by the claims previously submitted in the '327 application and/or specification, such that no new matter has been added. Moreover, various claims of the '327 application, characteristics of which have all been repeated in the instant application, stand rejected in view of Woelki et al. (U.S. 5,971,617).

Applicants respectfully request that the Woelki et al. reference be withdrawn as a prior art reference in the instant application, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §103(c), as revised on November 29, 1999. The subject matter of the Woelki et al. reference, and the invention claimed in the present application, are commonly owned, and were commonly owned at the time the instant invention was made. In particular, the assignee of Woelki et al. (Norton Pampus, GmbH), and the assignee of the instant application (Norton Company), are business units of Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corporation, of Wayne, NJ. Accordingly, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. §103(c), Applicants respectfully request consideration and allowance of the pending claims.

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a self-lubricating connector in which "the load bearing layer include[s] a lubricious plastic material selected from the group consisting of fluoropolymers, polyimide and aromatic ketones, and combinations thereof". This characteristic is not found in any of the art of record, other than the Woelki, et al. reference. As such, Applicants respectfully request allowance of this claim.

Other claims, including independent claim 24 and dependent claim 2, recite a self-lubricating connector such as a roller, which includes a tubular insert having an inner load bearing layer, disposed in concentric, in-situ-molded relationship with a molded polymeric member which extends circumferentially about the tube. This claimed subject matter is distinct from the art of record, including Luzsicza (U.S. 5,540,420), viewed alone or in combination with any other art of record. Moreover, even if a combination of cited references were proper, such combination would not produce the claimed 'concentric, molded-in-situ' configuration of the roller and self-lubricated tubular insert as now claimed.

The cited art also fails to disclose or suggest the claimed combination, but rather, actually teaches away from various aspects of the present invention. Narkon, (U.S. 5,398,294), for example, explicitly teaches away from the concept of placing self-lubricating bearing material on an inner surface of an outer

race: "A very important improvement in the construction of self-lubricated track roller bearings is disclosed... wherein the self-lubricating liner or bearing material is secured to the outer surface of the inner race." (Col. 1, lines 22-26).

As discussed in the '327 application, the claimed configuration advantageously provides a self-lubricated roller/connector, etc., which has the desirable bond characteristics provided by the tubular bearing insert, while also having the relatively robust structural characteristics provided by the wall thickness of the integral member/roller. The present invention also provides improved alignment (i.e., concentricity) between the bearing insert and the member/roller, since use of the polymeric material to fabricate the member enables the tubular insert to be molded in-situ with the member. Such in-situ molding enables the bearing insert to be accurately coaxially aligned with the mold cavity prior to the molding operation. This enables the present invention to be provided with a high degree of concentricity, generally more efficiently (i.e., less expensively) than conventional machined bearings of the prior art.

The present invention thus may be utilized to replace conventional assemblies which utilize a wheel member engaged with a discrete needle bearing. The integrated construction of the present invention further provides reduced component cost and

labor cost relative to prior art assemblies. For example, in a typical application, the present invention may provide an approximately 25% reduction in cost relative to the prior art, while also eliminating the prior art labor step of assembling a discrete needle bearing assembly into the roller. (Specification, page 12, lines 3-18.)

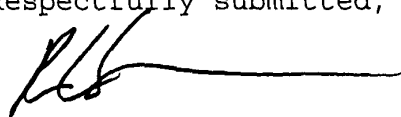
In addition to the advantages discussed above, including reduced cost and simplified assembly, the roller with integral bearing of the present invention provides improved corrosion and wear resistance relative to conventional rollers relying on complex metal bearing assemblies. Performance is also expected to improve by about 10-20 percent, as commonly determined by measuring the clearance or play of the bearing after use. (See page 15, lines 4-11.)

Applicants respectfully reiterate that these advantages were not taught by the cited art, and that as such, there is no motivation to combine them to produce the subject invention.

CONCLUSION

This application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action at an early date is respectfully requested. However, if the Examiner believes there are any remaining issues, Applicant's undersigned representative respectfully requests a telephone call to discuss the case.

Respectfully submitted,


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